

## **STROUD SYNOD MEETING - 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022 - FEEDBACK**

The meeting opened with the Prayer for the Synod led by Father Gary.

In the Diocesan phase all parishes sent in their responses and from these our **Diocesan Synod Response** was written and sent to the Bishops of England and Wales. This is available for every parishioner to read, download or print off from:

[www.cliftondiocese.com](http://www.cliftondiocese.com) scroll down to SYNOD and you will find the document there. We will also make copies available on [www.stroudcatholicchurch.com](http://www.stroudcatholicchurch.com)

### **The Process for tonight's meeting was explained by Nick as follows:**

Groups and Individuals are invited to put forward collective ideas through Listening and Discernment, constantly looking for the Holy Spirit to influence our thoughts and words.

The themes that have so far come from this process are:

1. How do we as a parish develop MISSION in our parish? What are we going to do?
2. Why are young people not in our groups? We need to provide the avenues – invite people – if they choose not to be involved, we have done our best.

This is an evolving process we want feedback and action, both pragmatic and practical vehicles to bring faith back.

We need to celebrate what works. How does it work?

What have I/WE done to make it work?

**The following pages are a synopsis of the three parishes (Stroud, Stonehouse and Woodchester) reporting thoughts shared at tonight's meeting.**

## **COMMUNION:**

- Who is on the Pastoral Council? Can we have a board with photographs and names on to enable people of the parish to identify them? Communication of Groups to the Parish.
- Who is on the Finance Committee? We need to know who these representatives are in the parish.
- Annual Finance Meetings/reports dropped out due to COVID - these need to be reinstated. Transparency. Passing on information so all parishioners are kept informed.
- Should members on Pastoral Councils and Finance Committee's be elected to post?
- Could we have a 'Pastoral Memo' explaining Leadership in parishes again for all three parishes and Websites
- Pragmatic ideas need a way to come into Pastoral Councils - perhaps all three parishes Pastoral Councils should meet as ONE and pool ideas - rotating meetings around the three parishes?
- Suggestions box in each parish for the people to raise concerns/praise good actions to be shared across all three parishes via Pastoral Councils.
- People liked the Bulletin sent out to some parishioners from Richard McDermott – but could this be divisive as not all parishioners receive it across the three parishes. How does it reflect on our priests and our care for them?
- United Reformed Church has an excellent support to the recently bereaved -
- Rosary School struggles to engage children with church - many families come from far flung communities rather than local ones?
- Demystify the Sacraments
- Should Catholics be more inclusive?
- Are we too legalistic?
- Mother and Baby Liturgy
- This is our Parish, we either make it grow or lose it - the people of the parish makes or breaks a parish.

## **PARTICIPATION:**

- We need to find ways to increase the understanding of Church Teaching
- MESSAGE: Essence of the readings, something with meaning that we can take away. A lasting thought. Making sure we are connecting/resonating with people.
- What opportunities can we use to enrich the Sacramental Church?
- Group discussions on Saints & Martyrs – using them as examples of people who found faith, lived faith and died for their faith - Living inspirations.
- Sermon - a powerful short message offering a personal connection to the message of the readings, making it accessible and relevant to all.
- How do we better engage with Youth in our parish? Ask them what they would like church to be for them.
- Give our Youth space to do what they like to do - learning about their faith through friendships
- Older groups could also do a similar thing within the groups they now hold i.e.; (Stroud) Friendship Circle, Grandparents Meeting, Parents Support Groups.
- Can the Church be left open a little longer after Mass so people can pray?
- Should the timing of Mass be changed - there is no Saturday Morning Mass now, could the 6:30pm be changed to say 4pm especially in the darker months, for those who cannot get to a Sunday Mass?
- Rosary on Saturday Mornings (Stroud) - does this still happen? It did take place after the Saturday Morning Mass. Could we start it up again and involve the children of the parish in this? Also a similar thing with Stations of the Cross involving our children.
- Children's Liturgy for tots to primary age groups
- More children/young adults to read at Mass - more children's Masses not just once a year for Christ the King.
- Establish over 25yrs to 40yrs Groups or younger - young people prefer to go on-line for Mass rather than come to Church - they say everyone at Mass in Church is over 60
- The Upper Room could be used for Xbox, Pool Table, and Large Screen?? Loss of Pastoral Centre/Youth Group (no one to run it!)

- We have a 'Missing Demographic - Teenage – 25 and 25 to 40 where they are? What is going to bring young people into Church? As children get older they don't want to come to Church - it has no relevance for them - it's boring
- We need to look at providing fun, exciting things for youth - parties etc
- We should look at other churches and find out what they do for young people to attract them
- There is a need for more volunteers for Children's Liturgy - Fr Gary needs to ask people - Fr David told them! (WHY? Can't the people of the parish ask people?) Children's Liturgy has fun.
- Speak with other churches e.g.: Baptists to see how they encourage young people.
- Welcome at the door - where are the welcomer's now? Everybody is welcome, we all have a part to play in how welcoming our churches are - smile at people, make them feel welcome, invite them for coffee after Mass and to groups within the parish.
- Create a Welcome Pack for all newcomers to help them integrate and discover more about the church and the area.
- Register new members so we can reach out to them and connect with them ask what support they need.
- We need to walk beside people - every door should be open. We all play a part in how we welcome one another.
- Announcements after Church Mass may help recruit/engage people in new activities - talking to people at the school gates, putting events on to have informal discussions.
- People should be walking away with a strong message of welcome and accessibility we should all talk to people, engage with people, listen to people, after Mass, at the school gates, mum's collecting children from school - what would they like to see the church doing for them?
- Relevance: What relevance is the church in people's lives? How can we increase the relevance? Are there other churches or parishes from whom we can learn? Share best practice amongst ourselves (Stroud/Stonehouse/Woodchester)
- Retaining young people - involve them in ministries
- We need to offer people a good experience, so they want to come back again and again and become part of the parish. A vibrant place, alive with music, hymns and other music - a big part of the experience.

- Follow up get together for Fish N Chips etc. for parish groups i.e. First Holy Communion, Confirmation Groups and other parish groups.
- Pilgrimage involving hiking and camping and grilling meat over a few days
- One church (Gloucester Church ) offer church service followed by different age group Disco after the service
- For Shared Church Space see St Philips Church Leckhampton Website
- Church Walks - Pilgrimage's - 5 valleys cycle - Carol karaoke
- House Groups, Bible Study Groups, Poetry Groups offering a shared experience.
- Discover ways in which we can all help one another in faith, in life, in the parish.

## **MISSION:**

- Engage with people of all ages through Social Events
- Female Deacons
- Welcoming the Divorced
- Father Gary's YouTube channel
- Develop support with 'Sportily' for young people
- Sacramental life of the church - reaching out to the margins
- Update our parishioners lists
- Place notices in local newsletters and papers inviting people to come to our church services/visit our churches (Stroud News and Journal)
- Give tours in our churches - historical and spiritual sides
- Update Websites regularly to make them interesting and user friendly
- Promote the Facebook Page - Woodchester Priory
- Accessibility - consider this more fully
- Welcome packs for newcomers in each parish (Stroud has an old one)